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The Waves of Agrarian Movements during the Mexican Revolution

The nineteenth-century not only brought independence to Mexico but transformed many people in the country side from objects to subjects of history. While different constitutions of independent Mexico had foreseen such a change it took place in a very different way than the framers of those documents had expected and specified. They had thought of a republic of enfranchised citizens, all of whom would determine the character of the country through their votes and who would create a stable and democratic Mexico. This was not to be the case.

The first massive entrance of the lower classes into the politics of what was then still New Spain was of a violent nature. Both Hidalgo and Morelos mobilized large segments of the rural populations to fight both for the independence from Spain and for more rights for the popular classes. Their defeat and execution by no means ended the role of the country people in shaping the destiny of Mexico.[1]

The newly acquired importance of the popular classes in the countryside in Mexican politics was partly due to their role during the Independence Wars. These wars had transformed their consciousness and taught them how to fight. These factors alone though do not explain the role that the popular classes in the countryside played in the history of the nineteenth-century in Mexico. One can not understand the developments in Mexico up to the end of the nineteenth century without considering the enormous weakness of the newly founded Mexican State. It was ravaged by constant civil wars, which made it impossible for any government to rule for a longer period of time and for the Mexican State to consolidate itself. These civil wars were of a multifaceted nature. At times they pitted liberals who wanted to de-

1 I prefer to use the term country people rather than peasants since the latter term is not only of a controversial but also of a limited nature while the first term encompasses the most diverse segments of rural society.

centralize Mexico and to limit to the power of the church against conservatives who wanted a strong state modeled on the Spanish colonial empire with a decisive role for the church. At times they pitted regional warlords against the central government. The army repeatedly staged coups. Frequently the state had to face popular uprisings. As if these convulsions from within were not sufficient, Mexico more than any other Latin American country became the preferred object of foreign aggression. In the Mexican-American war of 1846-1848 Mexico lost half of its territory to the United States and in the 1860's the French attempted to set up an empire there.

It is thus not surprising than the Mexican State did not have the power of its Spanish predecessor to mediate between peasants and landlords. The Spanish crown had been interested in maintaining village communities and to prevent their expropriation by large estates. What role idealism and humanism played in that decision is still a matter of controversy. What is not controversial is the fact that the state hoped in this way to continue levying tribute from village communities, a revenue that would have been lost if these communities became part of large estates which paid very few taxes. The Spanish courts frequently heeded appeals by villagers above all Indians. By the end of the colonial period between 25% and 30% of arable land was still in the hands of free villages communities (Borah 1993).

At the same time the Spanish authorities violently crushed village uprisings of which there were not too many prior to the war of independence. The Mexican state did not have the power even if they wanted to use it, which is debatable, to prevent attacks of landlords on village communities. It did not have the power either, which it would have preferred to use, to always protect landlords from attacks by popular classes in the countryside.

The most important way though, in which the weakness of the Mexican State affected the lower classes of society was that the power vacuum left by the national governments was largely filled by regional *caudillos* who constantly fought with each other for national power.

Unlike the national governments which for a time seemed to have been overthrown practically every year, regional strong men maintained their power for long periods of time, sometimes ranging to twenty or thirty years. In their struggles for national power or in their endeavors to maintain their regional control and protect it from the

central government these regional warlords frequently made alliances with village communities. This was the case for both the liberals and the conservatives in Mexico.

In the state of Guerrero, liberal caudillo Juan Álvarez, gained a large degree of popular support by protecting village communities from attacks by landlords and by the central government. On the other hand he also made sure that most landlords could retain control of their properties (Guardino 1996).

In the western area of Tepic, the conservative warlord Manuel Lozada had created a kind of Indian republic based on Cora and Huichol Indians. Like Álvarez, Lozada guaranteed the villagers control of their lands and maintenance of their traditional customs. At the same time though Lozada had allied himself with one of the strongest merchant houses in the area, the Spanish establishment of Barron y Forbes, which exercised a decisive influence on the region's economy. Like Álvarez in Guerrero, Lozada too mediated between the upper and the popular classes.

In very different ways landlords and free villagers coexisted in Northern Mexico. After conquering Northern Mexico, the Spanish crown had established settlements there consisting mainly of mining towns and large estates. These settlements had been the consistent object of attacks by nomadic Indians.

In order to counteract these attacks, the Spanish crown set up military colonies consisting of free villagers. Whoever settled these colonies whether white, mestizo or indian was given the full right of Spanish citizenship i.e. he became a *vecino*. These military colonists were given substantial amounts of land, exemption from taxation for many years and not only the right but the obligation to bear arms. On the whole as long as the Indian wars lasted, their conflicts with neighboring large estates were extremely rare. Both sides saw nomadic Indians as the main enemies. In addition the value of land was limited in this period. This was not only due to the small number of inhabitants in the north but also to the fact that because of poor communication and danger from nomadic Indians the possibilities of exporting agricultural goods or meat or cattle were extremely limited.[2]

2 Nugent (1988); Orozco y Orozco (1995); Alonso (1995); Katz (1998).

While some *caudillos* such as Juan Álvarez in Guerrero and Manuel Lozada in Tepic clearly managed to control their popular allies, in other cases regional *caudillos* had very different experiences. In Sonora, local strong men who mobilized the Yaqui Indians to fight against rivals soon lost control of their erstwhile allies as the Yaquis set out to control their own destinies and their own lands.

Politicians from Yucatan who attempted to enlist the armed support of Mayan Indians in one of their many civil wars underwent similar and in many respects even more dangerous experiences. The Maya turned against not only the rival *caudillos* but against their erstwhile allies and for a time it seemed as if all non Indians might be expelled from the Yucatan Peninsula in the "caste war" which shook Yucatan in the 1840's. While the Maya were defeated they nevertheless managed to set up a quasi independent republic of their own in the southern tip of Quintana Roo (Reed 2001).

The attempts by Mexican factions to establish alliances with popular classes were by no means limited to civil wars. In the guerilla wars against the French invaders Mexico's liberal leaders attempted to mobilize large segments of the rural population. The same was true for emperor Maximilian who drafted legislation to improve the lot of the lower classes in Mexico's countryside and especially that of the Indians.

As a result of these heterogeneous alliances most village communities managed to retain control of their lands and at the same time to maintain a large degree of autonomy. They did so in spite of the efforts of the liberal government of Mexico which introduced a clause in the 1857 constitution that outlawed communal property of village lands. The drafters of that constitution seem to have hoped that by dividing these lands among individual community members, a class of individual farmers not dissimilar to those of the United States would emerge. What some of them did not anticipate and others may have hoped for was that in many cases the dissolution of the village communities and the end of their traditional prohibition of land sales might lead to the acquisition of many of these lands by outsiders many of them landlords or merchants.

The situation of Mexico's country people changed dramatically in 1876 when Porfirio Díaz staged a coup and set up a dictatorship that went on to last for thirty four years. He put an end to civil wars and

created the first genuinely strong state in the history of independent Mexico. This state owed its strength to several factors. The first and perhaps the most important of these factors was that Mexico now became part of the world capitalist order. Exports and imports increased enormously as did foreign investments. One of the most important keys to this development was the construction of a railroad network in large parts of Northern and Central Mexico. As a result Mexican products could now be transported far more cheaply both to the United States and to the port of Veracruz.

The increasing revenues that the Central government received as a result of this rapid economic expansion allowed it to set up a strong bureaucracy and a strong army. Thanks to the railroads that army could rapidly be transported to many parts of Mexico and thus forestall or defeat any uprising.

It was of equal importance that the incentives for regional *caudillos* to rise up against the central government diminished dramatically. All of them profited both directly and indirectly from the increase in foreign investments. Some of them became intermediaries for foreign capitalists but even if this was not the case many landowners now found new markets for their products in other parts of Mexico and outside of the country. Any violent upheaval would have prevented foreign investments and rebellious *caudillos* would have paid a high economic price, not to speak of the personal risk they would have incurred, if they had attempted to arise against the existing government.

While Mexico's upper classes now had less incentive than ever before to attack the central government or to fight each other their incentive to turn against the popular classes increased by leaps and bounds. Land values rose as a result both of the construction of railroads and the ensuing economic boom. As landlords turned more and more to cultivation of cash crops their needs for supplementary labor increased. One of the best sources of such labor was constituted by the inhabitants of communal villages once they had lost all or part of their land and were forced to work on neighboring estates in order to survive.

While attacks on communal village lands had been difficult as long as the Mexican government was weak and the landlords could count on very limited support from that government the situation

changed greatly under Porfirio Díaz. Rebellions by villagers could now be much more easily quelled by government troops and many *caudillos* who in the past had needed the help of neighboring villages to fight against their rivals no longer needed that help.

Under Porfirio Díaz the hitherto strongest in most effective attacks against the properties and rights of Mexico's lower classes took place. The nature of these attacks was highly heterogeneous. They were very different from area to area both in kind and in intensity.

There is little doubt that the greatest attacks on villages communities occurred in areas where railroads were built and land values correspondingly rose, areas where cash crop production greatly increased and in areas of massive cattle exports. In northern Mexico the states of Chihuahua and Durango were particularly affected. In Chihuahua a profound transformation of the social and economic situation of the state had taken place in 1884. In that year the first railway line linking the state both to the United States and to Central Mexico went into operation. In that same year the danger of attacks from nomadic Apache Indians was dramatically reduced when the most important Apache leader, Geronimo, was captured by American troops. There was a huge wave of American investment both in land and mines in Chihuahua. The demand for agricultural products and cattle rose and land values increased. On the other hand since the Apache wars had ended neither the *hacendados* none the state authorities needed the fighting power of the former military colonists anymore. The result was a concerted attack both on their properties and on their traditional municipal autonomy. Hitherto communally owned lands were forcibly offered up for sale after a land law was passed by the oligarchy in 1905. The beneficiaries of these forcible sales and a times out right expropriations were not always identical. At times there were direct land expropriations by *hacendados*. This was the case when the Hacienda de Sombreretillo in Durango owned by the López Negrete family confiscated the lands of San Pedro Ocuila and forcibly evicted the former inhabitants from their houses. In other cases the beneficiaries could be merchants as in the case of the former military colony of Janos in Chihuahua. Frequently wealthy inhabitants of villages not dissimilar to the Russian Kulaks, allied themselves with neighboring estates and began to expropriate traditional village lands as was the

case in the frontier settlement of Cuchillo Parado in Chihuahua (Koreck 1985).

A further blow to Mexico's free villages was constituted by the survey and sale of Mexico's vast public lands. In order to gain some measure of control over lands that officially belonged to the government, the Díaz administration commissioned surveying companies to survey all of the lands considered public. In return they would receive one third on these lands. It has often been stated that these surveys resulted in massive expropriations of free villagers which had settled on these lands and did not have any official title to them. Recent research tends to disprove this idea (Holden 1994).

While some villagers were no doubt expropriated in many cases their lands were respected. That does not mean though, that the government measures taken with regard to public lands did not affect Mexico's free peasants. Before the surveys began anyone had access to good grazing lands and wild cattle on public lands. Once the surveys were completed many of these lands were privatized. Both the surveying companies and the government sold them to large investors and landowners. The attacks on the popular classes in the countryside were not limited to free villages but encompassed residents of haciendas as well. On many estates tenantry terms became much worse. In addition on a number of estates the best lands were now worked by the hacienda itself and many share croppers were relegated to marginal lands which were dependent on the highly irregular rainfall in many parts of Mexico.

In Southeastern Mexico above all in Chiapas, Tabasco and Yucatan there was a resurgence and expansion of conditions of debt peonage that in many senses were akin to slavery. The implementation of these attacks on the country people did not proceed without meeting significant degrees of resistance. Part of that resistance took place within the existing political and judicial system. Village communities complained to high officials in the Díaz government and to Díaz itself. They recurred to the courts and at times had their complaints printed in the weak and in some respects sporadic opposition press. To no avail. In most cases Díaz refused to intervene and told the complainants to resort to the courts. In the Spanish colonial period the courts were above all instruments of the Spanish crown and not of the domestic oligarchy in New Spain. As a result they frequently took deci-

sions contrary to the wishes of Mexico's *criollos*. In the Díaz period the links between the domestic oligarchy and the courts were much closer and thus the lower classes could expect very little help from the courts. In desperation in the 1890's many villagers resorted to armed uprisings. They were mercilessly crushed. Not only was the Díaz administration far stronger than any preceding Mexican government but the country people had lost the support of their traditional caudillo allies who had made their peace with Díaz and were mainly interesting in profiting from the new opportunities for enrichment that Mexico's rising economy provided. One of the means most resented by people in the countryside that the government applied against them was the end of their traditional autonomy. In much of Mexico villagers could not elect their own mayor and local authorities which were now imposed on them by officials directly responsible to the central government and to the governors, the *jefes políticos*.

Not all parts of Mexico were equally affected by these attacks on the country people. In the Western state of Jalisco significant amounts of lands belonged to a kind of agrarian middle class, the *rancheros*. These were frequently descendants of Spanish conquerors who had acquired family sized parcels of lands and owned their lands individually. Legally the Díaz administration could not undertake any measures against them. Nor were they interested in doing so. They were part to a large degree of Mexico's modern economy.

In Nuevo León military colonies had also emerged up during the Spanish colonial period but unlike Chihuahua no great efforts were made to expropriate their lands. One of the main reasons for this development was doubtless the fact that Nuevo León's oligarchy, concentrated above all in the city of Monterrey, mainly consisted of industrialists and financiers who had little interest in land.

In Northern Mexico as well as in areas of the south close to large cities, expropriated villagers were able in economic terms to make up for their loss of lands by finding work elsewhere. In the North many began to work in the newly developed mines and in railway construction. In addition many migrated to the United States either on a temporary or permanent basis.

In the South in areas such as Morelos close to the capital others tried to find work in the large cities. When in 1907 the recession that began in the United States spilled over into Mexico many of these

people faced a disastrous situation. They had lost the land, which had been their main means of subsistence and now they had lost the alternative employment that had allowed them to survive. It is thus not surprising that when a wealthy land owner from Northern Mexico, Francisco Madero, called for a massive uprising against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and in his platform included a demand that lands confiscated from villagers be returned to them, he found massive support in Mexico's countryside.

This support by no means encompassed all of Mexico and was concentrated in certain areas on the country which had been the hotbeds of agrarian discontent. In Chihuahua the core of the revolutionary army consisted of former military colonists who had either lost some or all of their lands and grazing areas for their cattle. They also deeply resented their loss of municipal autonomy which they had enjoyed for nearly two centuries. In the Laguna area of Durango and Coahuila they were joined by many hacienda laborers. In Morelos it was above all inhabitants of communal villages who had suffered in one way or the other from the expansion of the large sugar estates who revolted. In all of these areas the revolution did not take the form of a spontaneous uprising but had been prepared by a large scale political awakening of the popular classes. For reasons that would go beyond the scope of this paper, Díaz in his last years in office had opened up a certain political space. As a result Madero could campaign in many parts of Mexico and set up his anti-reeleccionist party. While Madero and his party suffered frequent reprisals prior to the election of 1910 they still enjoyed a measure of freedom.

In Morelos it was not Madero but a gubernatorial candidate, Francisco Leyva, who managed to mobilize large segments of the country people. In the Leyva campaign many villagers came into contact with each other and bonds were created which would help in the ensuing revolution. An active participant in this campaign was a leader of the community of Anenecuilco, Emiliano Zapata. Most of the communities that revolted had an old fighting tradition. In the North it was a tradition of combat against nomadic Indians. In the South and above all in Morelos that tradition went further back to the struggle against the French invaders and the supporters of Maximilian's ill-fated empire.

In the North the literacy rate was among the highest in Mexico and while many communities were isolated by large distances and even separated by deserts from each other, opposition newspapers such as the *Correo de Chihuahua* allowed people in the country side to communicate with each other. In Morelos the closeness of most villages to each other accelerated communications. In the North thanks to the border with the United States revolutionaries had no great difficulty in acquiring arms. In the South this problem was more difficult but the closeness of Morelos to the city of Mexico also made it possible to buy weapons though this was a much more difficult undertaking than in the North.

In the North the uprising was led to a large degree by rebellious members of the upper class, above all Francisco I. Madero himself or by José María Maytorena in Sonora. In the South there were no revolutionary landowners and the middle class was small and under developed and thus the leadership of the revolution was assumed by country men such as Emiliano Zapata and Genovevo de la O.

With some exceptions this first phase of the revolution was not radical in nature in the sense that there were no massive occupations of hacienda lands and no massacres of land owners or hacienda administrators. Surprisingly very few jacqueries took place. Many parts of Mexico especially the country's Southeast were largely unaffected by Madero's revolution. In the latter areas the control of the *hacendados* was so pervasive, the isolation of peons from each other so great, that participation in the revolution was sporadic and minimal.

The participants in what I would call the second wave of revolution in Mexico which lasted from late 1911 through the overthrow of Madero in February of 1913 were disillusioned revolutionaries of the first wave. They deeply resented the fact that Madero had not complied with the promise he had made in the *Plan de San Luis Potosí* to return lands confiscated from the popular classes to their former owners. In addition many of the revolutionaries had been led to believe that in one or the other way profound social changes in their favor would take place. When nothing of the kind happened and on the contrary the federal army attempted to demobilize the revolutionary army by force and began a policy of persecution not only of former revolutionaries but of their families as well, Emiliano Zapata broke with the Madero government. He issued the *Plan de Ayala* which demanded

the return all lands taken from villages and the division of one third of estate lands among the village communities. In the North, particularly in the states of Chihuahua and Durango disillusioned veterans of the Madero revolution also rose up in arms. No one has better expressed these feelings than the British consul in Durango:

> promises had been made to the men as inducement to enroll, by the lesser leaders; future large increases in wages, apportionment of land and other impossible benefits were not considered to be too extravagant or improper assurances when men were needed. Mr. Madero and his lieutenants have not found it easy to satisfactorily explain the non-compliance, nor why further patience must be exercised in these matters; the rank and file are feeling that the only real vestige of these promises is the resentment that non-fulfillments have left in their minds. Many state that they are victims of deception and injustice.

The revolt in the North though was far more complex than its counterpart in the South where the leadership clearly and unequivocally came from the lower classes of society. In the North the leader of the revolt Pascual Orozco who had also been the main military leader of the Maderista revolution in Chihuahua had allied himself with some of the wealthiest *hacendados* in Chihuahua. The latter were willing to take the risk of the popular revolution because they felt that Pascual Orozco could control it. If not, they hoped that the revolution would be defeated and the federal army would return to the North. As a result of the Madero revolution most federal troops had been withdrawn from that area and the oligarchy hoped that their return would clearly allow the area's upper classes to maintain their traditional control over these areas.

The Orozco revolt was defeated and he lost the support of many of the radical countrymen who had joined him. They felt that Orozco had betrayed them. Others reverted to banditry.

The third wave of revolution was very different of the first two, in that it was not organized and frequently comprised groups that had scarcely participated in the first two waves of revolt i.e. haciendapeons. The victory of the Madero revolution and the obvious weakness of the traditional Mexican state produced the most different kinds of resistance. Some times resistance simple meant "saying no" to the hacienda on subjects that the peons had hitherto fully accepted. A characteristic expression of such of an attitude were the events on a

British owned hacienda *Dos Bocas* in the state of Oaxaca where no major revolutionary movement had occurred in 1910-1911.

Sometime in the nineteenth century, a Mexican landowner, General Mejía, owner of the hacienda of Dos Bocas, seized lands belonging to the peasant village of Zoquiapan with the help of the courts. "The Indians appeared and still appear to believe", the British Consul reported on these events to the Foreign Office in London,

> that they possess inherent rights to till these ancient communal lands, as they were tilled by their fathers and grandfathers, and hold the theory that they were wrongfully abdicated to the estate. They seem, nevertheless, or at all events, some of them, to have acquiesced more or less grudgingly, in the altered conditions, and to have been satisfied with the status of colonists, or settlers on the land, provided that certain lapses on their part, such as permitting their cattle to stray about the plantation, were not too closely inquired into.

General Mejía was obviously an old-line cacique who believed that a certain amount of flexibility and give and take was necessary to keep his peons in line and to prevent them from becoming desperate and thus resorting to desperate means. His British son-in-law who inherited the estate, Woodhouse, had no such beliefs. "In respect to such matters as these", the British Minister to Mexico stated in diplomatic terms,

> it is contended that Mr. Woodhouse has shown some want of tact and that, by adopting a more conciliatory attitude in dealing with ignorant Indians, who considered that they have been defrauded of their lands, although not directly by Mr. Woodhouse himself, much friction might have been avoided.

In the same diplomatic vein, the British Minister concluded, "the peculiar position of the settlers on his estate would appear to entitle them to be treated with a greater measure of forbearance than ordinary tenants would have the right to expect".

When some of the hacienda laborers who showed sympathy for the revolution (although they had never participated in it) were shot and wounded by the owner of the plantation, Woodhouse, and were later arrested by soldier a rebellion broke out on the hacienda and peons assumed control over the estate. An observer sent by the state government to evaluate conditions at the hacienda of *Dos Bocas* re-

turned that by stating "all the troubles complained by Mr. Woodhouse are more or less chronic on all haciendas in the state of Durango".[3]

In other cases large scale strikes of hacienda peons occurred demanding not only higher wages but for these wages to be paid in money and not in scrip only redeemable at the company store. In other cases many disillusioned country men resorted to banditry.

While the reaction of the Madero administration to the second wave of revolts was clearly antagonistic his attitude towards the third wave was far more differentiated and nuanced Madero's government tolerated many of the strikes and in many cases of conflicts within the haciendas as in Oaxaca, it carried out attempts of mediation.[4]

The Madero administration also legalized some of the changes that inhabitants of communal villages had sought for a long time: the right to elect their own officials. Some times these newly elected authorities tried to reverse some of the land expropriations that had taken place in the Díaz period. With few exemptions they did not touch the haciendas but they did attempt to reverse some of the expropriations carried out by local strong men, merchants or wealthier peasants. It is not clear how the Madero government reacted to this type of local change.

On the whole while the three waves of revolt and social movements had eroded the power of the traditional oligarchy and the power of the *hacendados* in much of Central and Northern Mexico that erosion was still very limited in scope. The vast majority of *hacendados* still controlled their lands and the Madero government had made no move to, in any way radically alter the agrarian status quo.

That situation would change dramatically in what I would call the fourth wave of the revolution. In February of 1913 Mexican conservatives with help of the Mexican Federal army and U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson toppled the Madero government and established a military dictatorship headed by federal commander Victoriano Huerta. The attempts by the Mexican military to crush rural revolutionary movements once and for all were completely unsuccessful. On the contrary a fourth wave of revolutions now occurred. While in Morelos it represented a continuity with the second wave, in the North entirely

3 Prefect of Etla to state government, January 31, 1911, enclosed with message from Francis William Stronge, British minister to Mexico, of February 20, 1912, PRO, FO 37371-1396-11269-3738.

4 *Ibid*.

new revolutionary movements arose. Not only were these new revolutionary armies more powerful than their Maderista predecessors but also far more radical. As these armies advanced southward large groups of Mexican *hacendados* fled, since many had identified themselves with the Huerta dictatorship. Only foreign land owners whose properties the revolutionaries respected because they needed access to arms from the United States and *hacendados* such as the Madero family who had thrown in their lot with the revolutionaries remained.

The disappearance of the old army, the old authorities as well as the flight of the *hacendados* created a partial power vacuum. This power vacuum was enhanced by the civil war between the revolutionary factions that engulfed Mexico from the latter part of 1914 through 1915 which prevented any stable government from emerging in important parts of Mexico.

The consequences of this power vacuum for the countryside and how it was filled remain one of the most controversial problems in the historiography of Mexico. On the whole this period of power vacuum was characterized by a tremendous heterogeneity. In the areas controlled by Emiliano Zapata the leader of the liberating army of the South, the land of the large haciendas were divided among the adjoining villages and political power reverted to the *pueblos* as well as to the leadership of the Zapatista army. While important differences did exist between villages in Morelos and in adjoining areas, on the whole the territories controlled by the Zapatistas showed the greatest degree of homogeneity within the revolutionary zones of Mexico.

In the areas controlled by the other important movement with a lower class leadership that of Pancho Villa conditions were far different and far more heterogeneous (Katz 1998: 397-633). Villa's main policy with regard to the land was to confiscate the properties of the large estates and have them administered by the state. The revenues would be used to finance both the revolution and to provide cheap food to people in the cities as well as to help the poor, the unemployed and the widows and orphans of his soldiers. These confiscations were linked to the promise to divide these lands once the revolution triumphed among the soldiers of his army and to return confiscated lands to their former owners. While this was Villa's official policy which was applied in much of Chihuahua, in reality conditions within the Villista coalition were far more heterogeneous. One of the main

characteristics of that coalition was that Villa allowed his allies outside of Chihuahua to have a great degree of autonomy and leeway. The result of that policy is perhaps best described by looking at the situation in the state of Durango. In the most fertile part of the state, the "Laguna", which embraced both Durango and Coahuila many of the large cotton producing haciendas were confiscated from their former owners and administered by the state and the revenues went to the state treasury. In another part of Durango Villa's old crony from bandit days, Tomas Urbina, appropriated the Hacienda of Canutillo and the surrounding town of Las Nieves. John Reed an American correspondent who visited Canutillo wrote:

> I went out at dawn and walked around Las Nieves. The town belongs to General Urbina – people, houses, animals and immortal souls. At Las Nieves he and he alone wields the high justice and the low. The town's only store is in his house (Reed 1969: 57).

By contrast in a third part of Durango centered around the town of Cuencame and controlled by the troops of Calixto Contreras, a very different situation existed. Contreras was a traditional leader of a village community, the community of San Pedro Ocuila and for years he had led his people in a struggle to maintain their lands against the encroachment of the neighboring hacienda of Sombrerete. Once he assumed control of his area a large scale occupation of hacienda lands and division of these properties took place.

In the areas dominated by Venustiano Carranza, an *hacendado* who led one of the strongest Mexican revolutionary factions the situation was far less heterogeneous. Carranza was fundamentally opposed to any kind of large scale agrarian reform and hoped to maintain the hacienda as an institution. Nevertheless his generals forced him to acquiesce to a temporary occupation of Haciendas by revolutionary generals who thus hoped to finance the revolution. He nevertheless made it clear that such occupations were only temporary and should never result in the division of hacienda lands.

In contrast to the situation in the North and in much of Central Mexico in the country's Southeast very different conditions impaired. Here no real revolution had taken place, the *hacendados* had not fled and they continued to dominate their areas. One of the factors that helped them to maintain this control was that a large part of the inhabitants of the Southeast were debt peons living on haciendas and

kept isolated from the rest of Mexico by the land owners. In addition since many of the peons were Indians who did not speak Spanish maintaining that isolation was even easier for the *hacendados*.

By the end of 1915 with the military defeat on the conventionnist forces (i.e. the forces led by Villa and Zapata), the situation in Mexico's country side once again underwent a profound change. Carranza who assumed power in Mexico and headed the country from 1915 to 1920 was deeply opposed to any massive land reform. To attribute this opposition solely to the fact that he was an *hacendado* is far too a simple explanation. Carranza was above all a nationalist who hoped to modernize Mexico as rapidly as possible so that it could maintain its independence from the Unites States. He was profoundly convinced that a land reform would transform Mexico's agriculture from cash crop production to subsistence agriculture and thus lead to an economic disaster for the country. As a result he waged a ruthless and bloody campaign against Zapata and against other radical agrarian revolutionaries. He returned the haciendas to their expropriated owners. He thus in many respects replicated the policies that Madero had carried out in 1912 and 1913. There was one essential difference though, Carranza had to contend with the strong radical wing of his own movement that demanded land reform. In order to conciliate these radicals Carranza agreed to substantial legislation that for the first time in Mexico's history included land reform as part of the country's constitution. Article 27 of the new constitution which the Mexicans congress enacted in 1917 stated that communities had the right to demand lands from the large estates to be distributed among them. While Carranza had no intention of applying these laws and never did apply them, they nevertheless had profound consequences. They created a mobilization among peasants who met and circulated petitions to the government to demand the division of neighboring hacienda lands. Important segments of Mexico's rural classes were thus politicized and these movements constituted the embryo of political peasant organizations that were to emerge a few years later. These peasant mobilizations also created a counterforce to *hacendados* who recovered their properties which had been confiscated by revolutionary armies. They never managed to recover the influence over their peons and neighboring free villagers that had been theirs before the outbreak of the revolution.

There was one kind of social movement that Carranza and his government initiated that I would call the fifth wave of the Mexican revolution in the countryside. This movement was centered in Mexico's Indian Southeast. The *hacendados* of that area whose power was still intact were very wary of Carranza and his government. In view of his radical legislation some of them feared that he might implement these laws. Others did not want to share power with the central government. Others still, who may not have believed in the sincerity of Carranza's agrarian radical legislation did have a serious divergence with Carranza with regard to debt peonage. As a convinced capitalist Carranza did not believed in conditions of semi slavery and greatly and sincerely opposed the institution of debt peonage that was so prominent in Mexico's southeastern regions. When the *hacendados* of Mexico's southeast refused to subordinate themselves to his government he sent troops to occupy these areas. This was not only due to his wish to control all of Mexico but also had its origins in the fact that some of the most important cash crops that could bring his government desperately needed revenue were produced in those areas. This was above all the case of Henequen in Yucatan whose price had increased by leaps and bounds after the outbreak of World War I prevented the transportation of competing raw materials from Africa to the Unites States.

In order to gain popular support in those areas and checkmate the power of the *hacendados* Carranza's generals once they entered the Southeast proclaimed the end of debt peonage. Some of the men charged with carrying out these policies were some of his most radical supporters such as Salvador Alvarado who was sent to Yucatan and Francisco Mugica whom Carranza sent to Tabasco. It was a convenient way not only of maintaining the support of these radicals who were disillusioned by Carranza's conservative policies in Northern and Central Mexico but also of maintaining them far away from the center of his administration. The most successful of these radicals was Alvarado in Yucatan who had not only abolished debt peonage but sent radical instructors not dissimilar to political commissars as they existed in the Soviet Union, to the Haciendas to mobilize the peons against their owners. The result was an enormous radicalization in the countryside of Yucatan, that finally led to the creation of the first genuine radical party to emerge from the Mexican Revolution, the

Socialist Party of the Southeast led by one of Mexico's most interesting and original ideologues, Felipe Carrillo Puerto (Joseph 1980).

These policies were least successful in Chiapas where clientelistic relations between *hacendados* and peons on the one hand and depredations committed by Carranza's troops led by the relatively corrupt Jesús Agustín Castro, resulted in a united opposition by Indian peons and *hacendados* to the Carranza regime which prevented it from effectively controlling that state.

In 1920 a new phase of the history of the Mexican Revolution began. Mexico's army led by Álvaro Obregón overthrew the administration of Venustiano Carranza. Unlike his predecessor Obregón was willing to make large scales concessions to rebellious countrymen in order to pacify the country. He signed an agreement with the Zapatistas (Emiliano Zapata had been assassinated two years earlier by orders of Venustiano Carranza) to lay down their arms in return for being allowed not only to keep their lands but to have a Zapatista governor of Morelos.

In the North the new Obregón government granted an amnesty to Pancho Villa, gave land to all of his veterans and undertook a large scale land reform in Chihuahua. In other parts of the country where rebellious countrymen where still under arms, Obregón made similar concessions.

In many respects Mexico's situation in the 1920 was strangely reminiscent of the situation that had impaired in the country one century earlier. The newly emerging Mexican government though not as weak as its predecessors a century earlier, still faced a tremendous amount of opposition from warlords or old line conservatives. In order to be able to maintain itself the new revolutionary government as well as *caudillos* i.e. warlords in different parts of the country made alliances with inhabitants of free villages and frequently with their newly created political organizations and thus once more the peasantry entered Mexican politics.

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